

Mitra Sharafi

UW Law School • 975 Bascom Mall • Madison, WI, USA • 53706-1399

✉ mitra.sharafi@wisc.edu [@mjsharafi](https://twitter.com/mjsharafi) ☎ office: (608) 265-8428
[faculty page](#) [research website](#)

Professional status

Professor, [University of Wisconsin Law School](#) and [Legal Studies](#) program, with [History](#) and [Center for South Asia](#) affiliation, *2018-present*

Research interests: South Asian legal history & socio-legal studies • history of forensic science • history of the legal profession & legal education • law books • legal pluralism • law & religion • law & minorities

Previous academic appointments

2014-18 **Associate Professor**, UW Law School and Legal Studies program
2007-14 **Assistant Professor**, UW Law School and Legal Studies program
2005-7 **Research Fellow**, Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University, UK

Education

2000-6 **PhD**, History, Princeton University
Dissertation: “Bella’s Case: Parsi Identity and the Law in Colonial Rangoon, Bombay and London, 1887-1927”
1998-9 **Bachelor of Civil Law** (LLM equivalent), Oxford University
(Magdalen College)
1996-8 **Bachelor of Arts (Law)** (JD equivalent), Cambridge University
(Sidney Sussex College)
1992-6 **Bachelor of Arts (History)**, McGill University

Selected grants & fellowships

2020-21 [Frederick Burkhardt Fellowship for Recently Tenured Scholars](#), American Council of Learned Societies: residential fellowship linked to the [National Center for the Humanities](#), NC ([class of 2018](#))
fall 2018 [Shelby Cullom Davis Center Fellowship](#), History Dept., Princeton University: residential fellowship
2018-23 [H. I. Romnes Faculty Fellowship](#): research funds (\$60,000) provided by the UW–Madison Office for the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education with funding from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation

- summer 2018 National Endowment for the Humanities summer stipend award: [no. FT-259722](#) (\$6,000)
- spring 2017 [UW Institute for Research in the Humanities Resident Fellowship](#)
- fall 2011 & fall 2012 [Institute for Advanced Study Mellon Fellowship for Assistant Professors](#), School of Historical Studies, IAS, Princeton, NJ (\$145,440)
- 2009-11 National Science Foundation "[Law & Social Sciences](#)" research grant: Award no.SES-0850581 (\$87,212)
- 2007 South Asia Council's Dissertation Award Grand Prize (Canada)
- 2003-4 Social Science Research Council's [International Dissertation Research Fellowship](#)

Scholarly publications

(most available electronically [here](#))

Books

- in progress* Monograph, [Fear of the False: Forensic Science in Colonial India](#)
- in progress* Monograph/Digital humanities project on non-European students (including [South Asians](#)) who studied law at the Inns of Court in London, c. 1860s-1960s
- 2014 Monograph, [Law and Identity in Colonial South Asia: Parsi Legal Culture, 1772-1947](#) (New York: Cambridge University Press), with South Asian edition (Ranikhet, India: Permanent Black, 2017); winner of the [2015 J. Willard Hurst Award](#) for best book in socio-legal history, Law and Society Association (LSA)
- 2010 Lectures, *Colonial Parsis and Law: A Cultural History: Government Fellowship Lectures 2009-2010* (Mumbai: K. R. Cama Oriental Institute)

Articles (* indicates peer-reviewed)

- in progress* Article projects under way on (1) death investigation, (2) suicide and poison, (3) venereal disease and expert witnesses, and (4) the history of law-book publishing, all in modern South Asia
- 2020 *"[Abortion in South Asia, 1860-1947: A medico-legal history.](#)" *Modern Asian Studies* 1-58
- 2015 "[South Asian Legal History.](#)" *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 11, 309-36
- 2010 *"[The Marital Patchwork of Colonial South Asia: Forum Shopping from Britain to Baroda.](#)" *Law and History Review* 28:4, 979-1009
- May 2010 *"[The Slaves and Slavery of Marie Claire Chabert: Familial Black Slaveholding in Antebellum Louisiana.](#)" *J. of Civil Law Studies* 4:1, 187-215
- 2009 *"[The Semi-Autonomous Judge in Colonial India: Chivalric Imperialism meets Anglo-Islamic Dower and Divorce Law.](#)" *Ind. Econ. and Social Hist. Rev.* 46:1, 57-81

- 2008 [“Justice in Many Rooms since Galanter: De-romanticizing Legal Pluralism through the Cultural Defense.”](#) *Law & Contemp. Problems* 71, 139-46
- fall 2007 [“A New History of Colonial Lawyering: Likhovski and Legal Identities in the British Empire.”](#) *Law & Social Inquiry* 32:4, 1059-94
- April 2003 *[“The Slave Ship Manuscripts of Capt. Joseph B. Cook: A Narrative Reconstruction of the Brig Nancy’s Voyage of 1793.”](#) *Slavery & Abolition* 24:1, 71-100

Book chapters

- in progress* “South Asians and West Africans at the Inns of Court: Empire and Expulsion circa 1900” in Jacob Cogan and Kenneth Mack, eds., *Festschrift in honor of Hendrik Hartog*
- forthcoming* “Parsi Legal Culture, Constitutionalism, and the Rule of Law” in Nawaz B. Mody, ed., volume in honor of the centennial anniversary of the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute (Mumbai: K. R. Cama Oriental Institute); posted on SSRN as [University of Wisconsin Legal Studies Research Paper No.1479](#) (2019)
- 2019 “The Imperial Serologist and Punitive Self-Harm: Bloodstains and Legal Pluralism in British India” in Ian Burney and Christopher Hamlin, eds., [Global Forensic Cultures: Making Fact and Justice in the Modern Era](#) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 60-85; winner of the [2020 LSA Article Prize](#)
- 2018 “Indian Law” in Markus Dubber and Christopher Tomlins, eds., [Oxford Handbook of Legal History](#) (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 839-57
- 2017 [“Parsi Life Writing: Memoirs and Family Histories of Modern Zoroastrians”](#) in A. Hintze and A. Williams, eds., *Holy Wealth: Accounting for This World and the Next in Religious Belief and Practice. Festschrift for John R. Hinnells* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz), 251-77
- 2015 [“Law and Modern Zoroastrians”](#) in M. Stausberg and Y. Vevaina, eds., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell), 299-312
- 2012 [“Two Lives in Law: The Reminiscences of A. J. C. Mistry and Sir Norman Macleod, 1884-1926”](#) in D. Y. Chandrachud, Anoop V. Mohta and Roshan S. Dalvi, eds., *A Heritage of Judging: The Bombay High Court through 150 Years* (Mumbai: Maharashtra Judicial Academy), 258-83
- 2007 [“Judging Conversion to Zoroastrianism: Behind the Scenes of the Parsi Panchayat Case \(1908\)”](#) in J. R. Hinnells and A. Williams, eds., *Parsis in India and the Diaspora* (London: Routledge Curzon), 159-80

Other scholarly work

- 2020 [“Mixing Legal Systems in the British Empire,”](#) University of Wisconsin Legal Studies Research Paper No.1591, 1-10 (unpublished)

- fall 2017 [“Hijacking Law,”](#) *Law & Social Inquiry* 42:4, 1240-7, essay responding to symposium review essays on my 2014 book by Assaf Likhovski, Bhavani Raman, Winnifred Sullivan, and Sylvia Vatuk
- 2016 [Book review](#) of David Arnold, *Toxic Histories: Poison and Pollution in Modern India* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), *Law and History Rev.* 34:4, 1071-3
- 2007 Encyclopedia articles: “Insurance” and “The Nancy” in Toyin Falola and Amanda Warnock, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), 230-1, 286-7

Other writing

Op-eds and magazine articles

- 2020 [“Pandemic or poison? How epidemics shaped Southasia’s legal history,”](#) *Himāl Southasian* (April 20)
- 2018 [“The History of Poison & Stereotypical Narratives,”](#) *Madras Courier* (Nov.12)
- 2017 [“Many think Parsis are a model minority. Are they?”](#) [title not approved by author], *Times of India* (Sept.20)
- 2016 [“Why the US can’t claim to have been India’s colonial cousin in its struggle against the British,”](#) *Scroll.in* (July 4)
- 2015 [“Snoop Dogg feels the bite of Parsi legal culture,”](#) *Scroll.in* (July 3)
- 2015 [“The Changing Face of the Legal Profession,”](#) *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis) (Feb.16)

Interviews, podcasts and coverage of my research

- 2020 [Writing History from the Courtrooms: In Conversation with Mitra Sharafi,](#) online interview with Uponita Mukherjee for Borderlines (*Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* website) (August 12)
- 2020 [How the taboo on Hindu widow remarriage led to liberal abortion norms in colonial India,](#) excerpt from 2020 *Modern Asian Studies* article on abortion in *Scroll.in* (August 9)
- 2019 Flash Forward podcast with Rose Eveleth: [CRIME: CSI++](#), conversation about my Imperial Serologist book chapter (30:50-42:30)
- 2018 [XQs XI: A Conversation with Mitra Sharafi,](#) online interview with Tapsi Mathur for Chapati Mystery (Feb. 9)
- 2018 [AHA Member Spotlight: Mitra Sharafi,](#) American Historical Association (AHA) website (July 3)
- 2017 [A Court for Poor Wives,](#) excerpt from my 2014 book in Bombaywalla: Historical Works (Oct. 10)
- 2016 [Podcast interview](#) on my 2014 book with Ian Cook, New Books in South Asian Studies (March 2)

- 2015 article on *BBC News* online: Soutik Biswas, [Parsi matrimonial courts: India's only surviving jury trials](#) (Sept. 24)
- 2005-18 interviews and articles on my research on Parsi legal history in Parsi community magazines [Parsiana](#) and [Hamazor](#)

Blogposts

- 2016+ Regular contributor to the [Legal History Blog](#) (approx. 2-3 posts per week); monthly [guest blogger](#) for March 2015
- 2014+ My [South Asian Legal History Resources](#) website (est. 2010), including monthly blogposts publicized on Twitter ([@mjsharafi](#))
- 2014 [Death and Legal History on Sunday Afternoons](#), Cambridge University Press' 1584 blog

Selected presentations

- 2020 Plenary address (virtual): "Interdisciplinary Studies and Forensics: Why history matters" (live video talk available [here](#) at 1:11:05+), 1st International Symposium on Crime Studies, O. P. Jindal Global University, Delhi (Oct.28)
- 2020 Lecture (virtual): "Imperial Truth Mechanics: Law and Forensic Science in Colonial India" (pre-recorded video talk available [here](#)), "Empires of Law in Colonial South Asia" event (Q&A with Tanya Agathocleous), Rutgers British Studies Center (Oct.12)
- 2018-20 Paper: "South Asians and West Africans at the Inns of Court: Empire and Expulsion circa 1900," Boston College Legal History Roundtable (Oct.2, 2018); The Victoria Colloquium, University of Victoria, British Columbia (Jan.31, 2019); Georgetown Legal History Colloquium (Nov.5, 2019); and UW Law School (Feb.12, 2020)
- 2019 Conference talk: "Poison and Falsity in Indian Forensics," Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison (Sept.19) and UW History Dept. (Oct.28)
- 2018-19 Paper: "Abortion in South Asia, 1860-1947: A medico-legal history," ["The Future of Asian Studies Symposium: Law and Religion in Asia,"](#) Rutgers University (Oct.26, 2018); also presented as a lecture at Stanford Law School (Feb.14, 2019) and Center for South Asia, UW-Madison (March 14, 2019)
- 2018-19 Paper: "Truth, Adversarialism, and Forensic Experts in the Indian courtroom, 1879-1940," Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Research, Princeton University (Nov.16, 2019). Also presented as conference talk at "Legal Histories of the British Empire" conference, University of the West Indies, Barbados (July 13, 2018); and as a lecture at Drexel University (Dec.7, 2018)
- 2018 Lecture: "Fear of the False: Forensic Science in Colonial India," Indiana Bloomington Arts & Humanities Festival: [India Remixed](#), Indiana U.

- Bloomington (Feb.15); and American Bar Foundation seminar series (Feb.21)
- 2017-18 Paper: "Forensic Experts in Colonial India: Handwriting Analysis as a Suspect Science," Yale Law School Legal History Forum (Dec.5, 2017), ["Legal Histories of Policing and Surveillance" workshop](#), Center for Law and History, Stanford University (April 20, 2018). Also presented as a lecture at Dept. of History, Syracuse University (April 6, 2018)
- 2017 Paper: "Corruption and Forensic Experts in Colonial India," Baldy Center Distinguished Speaker lecture series, SUNY-Buffalo Law School (March 3) and "Law in Global History: Beyond Imperial Frames" workshop, Dept. of History, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada (April 21). Also presented as a lecture at Center for South Asian Studies, University of Michigan (Feb. 17); Dept. of History and Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania (March 13); UW Institute for Research in the Humanities (April 10); and Dept. of History, Washington University, St. Louis (April 12)
- 2017 Prison teaching lecture: "India's histories: from empires to independence," Missouri Eastern Correctional Center (MECC), Pacific, Missouri (April 12)
- 2016 Lecture with paper: "The Imperial Serologist and Punitive Self-Harm: Bloodstains and Legal Pluralism in British India," *University of California Irvine Law Review* symposium and UCI Socio-Legal Workshop, Irvine (Aug.26)
- 2016 Mini-plenary conference panel talk: "Mixing Legal Systems in the British Empire," LSA annual meeting, New Orleans (June 4)
- 2015-16 Paper: "Blood Testing and Fear of the False in Colonial India," Legal History Workshop, University of Minnesota Law School (Oct.1, 2015); and UW Law School (Feb.10, 2016). Also given as a lecture at Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi (Aug.21, 2015); UW Center for South Asia weekly lecture series (Feb.11, 2016); and UW History of Science Brownbag lecture series (Feb.12, 2016). And presented as a workshop talk at ["Locating Forensic Science and Medicine" conference](#), U. of Notre Dame Global Gateway, London (July 24, 2015)

Selected chair, discussant & reader roles

- 2020 Commentator on book event (virtual): Nurfadzilah Yahaya, *Fluid Jurisdictions: Colonial Law and Arabs in Southeast Asia* (Cornell University Press, 2020), National University of Singapore (Oct.22)
- 2020 Reader on Author-Meets-Reader panel (virtual) for Stefan Kirmse, *The Lawful Empire: Legal Change and Cultural Diversity in Late Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), virtual LSA conference (May 31)

- 2017-20 Chair-discussant of “New Books in South Asian Legal Studies” panel, sponsored by South Asia CRN 22, annual LSA conferences in 2017 (Mexico City), 2019 (Washington, DC), 2020 (virtual)
- 2019 Chair-discussant of panel, “Infanticide and Illegitimate Pregnancies in Premodern Europe and the Modern Americas,” ASLH (Boston, Nov.22)
- 2018 Chair-discussant of panels, “Legal Histories of the British Empire” and “Age in Empire,” LSA, Toronto (June 7-8)
- 2018 Book panel commentator on George Gadbois’ *Indian Supreme Court: The Beginnings* with Sugata Bose, Mark Tushnet, and Vasujith Ram, Harvard Law School (March 26)
- 2017 Chair-discussant of panel, “Law, Identity, and Citizenship in Modern India,” ASLH, Las Vegas (Oct.28)
- 2017 Plenary panel commentator on “New Imaginings for Sociological Studies: A Plenary in recognition of Lawrence Friedman,” LSA, Mexico City (June 22)
- 2017 Commentator on papers at “Entanglements of Law and Religion in South Asia” workshop, Yale University (April 28)
- 2016 Chair of “Pedagogy Roundtable on Undergraduate Legal Studies Teaching: Issues and Challenges,” Midwest Law & Society Retreat (Nov.19)
- 2016 Chair of panel, “Law and Accidents in South Asia” at launch of Bhopal digital archive (Oct.19)
- 2016 Reader on Author-Meets-Reader panel for Srimati Basu, *The Trouble with Marriage: Feminists confront law and violence in India*, LSA, New Orleans (June 2)
- 2015 Roundtable panelist, “Tracing the past into the present: How living descendants affect the substance, methods, and ethical stakes of legal history” with Barbara Welke, chair, ASLH, Washington, DC (Oct.30)
- 2015 Commentator on student papers at “Race, Law & History Pro-Seminar,” University of Michigan Law School (April 20)

Courses taught

(Legal Studies syllabi available [here](#))

- 2007+ UW Law School (fall): Contracts I
- 2008+ UW Legal Studies & History (undergraduate, spring):
- [History of Forensic Science](#) (2014+)
 - [Legal Pluralism](#) (2008+)
- 2008-13 UW Legal Studies (undergraduate, spring):
- [Law & Colonialism](#) (2009-13)
 - [Lawyers & Judges in the British Empire](#) (2008)

UW service

- 2010+ Law School:

- Tenure & Promotions committee [2014-20, excluding spring 2017 and fall 2018; chair (2015-16)]
- Ad Hoc Committee on Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET), chair (2019-20)
- Appointments committee (2010-11, 2013-14, 2017-18)
- Student Awards committee (spring 2019)
- Institute for Legal Studies (ILS) committee (2014-18)
- Co-director/director of [ILS Law & Society Graduate Fellows](#) program (2016-2020)
- Study Abroad committee: director for India (2017+)
- [South Asia Legal Studies Working Group](#), organizer (2014+)

- 2014+* Legal Studies program:
- Legal Studies core faculty steering committee (2014+)
 - Awards committee chair (2015-16)
 - Diversity, Climate and Inclusion committee (2018-20), including as chair (2019-20)
- spring 2019* History Dept:
- Hiring committee for South Asia search (non-voting member)
- 2014+* Center for South Asia:
- Advisory Board (2014-19, excluding spring 2017 and fall 2018), including Annual Conference committee, Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) award committee
 - [Annual Conference on South Asia](#) committee, chair for 44th (2015) and 45th (2016) conferences
- 2014+* UW campus level:
- Named Awards Arts & Humanities committee (2019-20)
 - Nominating Committee for Rhodes, Marshall, and Mitchell Scholarships (2017-18, 2019-20)
 - Future of Asian Studies committee (2014)

Other service

- 2020+* Otago Centre for Law and Society, University of Otago, NZ: International Advisory Board member
- 2016-18* *Law and Social Inquiry*: editorial board member
- 2015+* Oxford Legal History book series: editorial board member
- 2009+* American Society for Legal History (ASLH):
- Small Grants for Digital Legal History (new program for graduate students during pandemic): selection committee member (2020)
 - [J. Willard Hurst Summer Institute in Legal History](#) faculty director (2017, 2019); selection committee member and Wisconsin representative (2009-15)

- [Peter Gonville Stein Book Award](#) committee chair, new prize for best book on non-US legal history (2016-18)
 - Nominating Committee (2017-20)
 - Board of Directors (2012-15)
 - Program Committee member (2009) and co-chair (2013-14)
- 2005+ Law and Society Association (LSA):
- Trustee, [Class of 2021](#) (2019-21)
 - Governance committee, chair (2018-19, 2019-20)
 - Program committee (2016-17)
 - International Prize committee (2014)
 - South Asia [Collaborative Research Network](#) 22: organizer (2005+)
 - [J. Willard Hurst Book Prize](#) committee member (2015-16)

Conferences organized

- 2021 Global Forensic Histories workshop, with co-organizer Binyamin Blum; funded by UC Hastings Law & ASLH; San Francisco/virtual (March 19-20)
- 2011 [Comparative Legal Histories workshop: Colonial/ Postcolonial India and Mandatory Palestine/Israel](#), co-organized with Assaf Likhovski and Renisa Mawani, Stanford Law School (June 6)
- 2010 Legal History and Religion workshop, UW Law School (Sept.24)
- 2007+ [Annual South Asia Legal Studies workshop](#), with co-organizer Sumudu Atapattu, UW Law School (every October, immediately preceding the [Annual Conference on South Asia](#))

Peer reviews

- 2013+ Book proposals (some with sample chapters) reviewed for: Cambridge University Press (2) • Manchester UP • Princeton UP (2)
- 2010+ Book manuscripts reviewed for: Ashgate • Cambridge UP • Cornell UP (2x) • Oxford UP India
- 2008+ Grant, workshop & fellowship applications reviewed for: School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study (3) • Law & Humanities Junior Scholars Workshop (4) • National Humanities Center (2) • National Science Foundation (2) • Soc. Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- 2006+ Article manuscripts reviewed for: *Am. Hist. Rev.* • *Austr. Feminist LJ* • *Am. J. of Comparative Law* • *Eng. Historical Review* • *Itinerario* • *J. of Colonialism and Colonial History* • *J. of Law, Culture and the Humanities* (2) • *J. of Legal History* • *Law and History Review* • *Law & Social Inquiry* (5) • *Modern Asian Studies* (3) • *ShariaSOURCE* • *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*

Archival & Special Collections research experience

- 2018 Training: "[C-85. Law Books: History & Connoisseurship](#)," Rare Book School, taught by Mike Widener and Ryan Greenwood (Yale Law School, June 10-15)
- 2003+ India: Bombay High Court (Mumbai) • First Dastoor Meherjirana Library (Navsari) • Godrej Archives (Mumbai) • K. R. Cama Oriental Institute Library (Mumbai) • National Archives of India (Delhi) • Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (Delhi) • Parsi Panchayat Archives (Mumbai) • Tata Central Archives (Mumbai) • University of Bombay Archives (Mumbai) • Bhikaji Unwalla Zoroastrian Library (Udwada) • N. M. Wadia Trust (Mumbai) • Wadia Ghandy and Co. (Mumbai)
- 2003+ UK: Ancient Iran and India Trust (Cambridge) • British Library (London) • Highland Council Archives (Inverness) • Honourable Society of the Inner Temple (London) • Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn (London) • Honourable Society of the Middle Temple (London) • National Archives (London) • National Library of Wales (Aberystwyth) • Privy Council Office (London) • Royal Society of Medicine (London) • University of Cambridge Archives (Cambridge) • University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections (Glasgow) • Wellcome Library Archives and Manuscripts (London) • World Zoroastrian Organization Archives (London)
- 2003+ Other locations: Kings College Dublin Archives (Dublin) • Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.) • Musée Guimet (Paris) • Public Records Office Victoria (Melbourne) • Riesenfeld Rare Books Research Center, University of Minnesota Law Library (Minneapolis)

Current professional memberships

American Historical Association • Asian Law and Society Association • ASLH • Association for Asian Studies • LSA

Languages

English (native speaker) • French (advanced) • Gujarati and German (intermediate reading knowledge) • Hindi, Latin and Persian (basic knowledge)

[updated on Nov. 1, 2020]